

We reproduce below two views on the relationship of intellectuals to society. The first, which contains extracts from a pamphlet by Trotsky, was written in response to the ideas of Max Adler, editor of the official organ of the Austrian Social Democratic Party.

For Adler, the intelligentsia are a class existing within the framework of Bourgeois society.

“And for Adler the question is: who or what possesses the better right to the soul of this class? What ideology is inwardly obligatory upon it, as a result of the very nature of its social functions? Adler answers: the ideology of collectivism. That the European intelligentsia, in so far as they are not directly hostile to the ideas of collectivism, at best stand aloof from the life and struggle of the working masses, neither hot nor cold, is a fact to which Adler does not shut his eyes. But it shouldn't be like that, he says, there are no adequate objective grounds for it. Adler decidedly opposes those Marxists who deny the existence of general conditions which could bring about a mass movement of the intelligentsia towards socialism..... The social grounds for the intelligentsia to enter the camp of collectivism which Adler relies on have indeed been there for a very long time; and yet there is no trace, in a single European country, of any mass move by the intelligentsia towards Social Democracy. Adler sees this, of course, just as well as we do. But he prefers to see the reason for the estrangement of the intelligentsia from the working class movement in the circumstance that the intelligentsia don't understand socialism. In a certain sense that is true. But in that case what explains this persistent lack of understanding, which exists alongside their understanding many other extremely complicated matters? Clearly, it is not the weakness of their theoretical logic, but the power of irrational elements in their class psychology. Adler himself speaks about this.....But he thinks, he hopes, he is sure - and here the preacher gets the better of the theoretician - that European Social Democracy will overcome the irrational elements in the mentality of the brain-workers if only it will reconstruct the logic of its relations with them. The intelligentsia don't understand socialism because the latter appears to them from day to day in its routine shape as a political party, one of many, just like the others. But if the intelligentsia can be shown the true face of socialism, as a world wide cultural movement, they cannot but recognize in it their best hopes and aspirations. So Adler thinks.

We have come so far without examining whether in fact pure cultural requirements (development of technique, science, art) are in fact more

powerful, so far as the intelligentsia as a class are concerned, than the class suggestions radiating from family, school, church and state, or than the voice of material interests. But even if we accept this for the sake of argument, if we agree to see in the intelligentsia above all a corporation of priests of culture who up to now have merely failed to grasp that the socialist break with bourgeois society is the best way to serve the interests of culture, the question then remains in all its force: can Western European Social Democracy offer the intelligentsia, theoretically and morally, anything more convincing or more attractive than what it has offered up to now?

Collectivism has been filling the world with the sound of its struggle for several decades already. Millions of workers have been united during this period in political, trade-union, co-operative, educational and other organizations. A whole class has raised itself from the depths of life and forced its way into the holy of holies of politics, regarded hitherto as the private preserve of the property-owning classes. Day by day the socialist press - theoretical, political, trade-union - reevaluates bourgeois values, great and small, from the standpoint of a new world. There is not one question of social and cultural life (marriage, the family, upbringing, the school, the church, the army, patriotism, social hygiene, prostitution) on which socialism has not counterposed its view to the view of bourgeois society. It speaks in all the languages of civilized mankind. There work and fight in the ranks of the socialist movement people of different turns of mind and various temperaments, with different pasts, social connections and habits of life. And if the intelligentsia nevertheless 'don't understand' socialism, if all this together is insufficient to enable them, to compel them to grasp the cultural-historical significance of this world movement, then oughtn't one to draw the conclusion that the causes of this fatal lack of understanding must be very profound and that attempts to overcome it by literary and theoretical means are inherently hopeless?

This idea emerges still more strikingly in the light of history. The biggest influx of intellectuals into the socialist movement - and this applies to all countries in Europe - took place in the first period of the party's existence, when it was still in its childhood. The first wave brought with it the most outstanding theoreticians and politicians of the International. The more European Social-Democracy grew, the bigger the mass of workers that was united around it, the weaker (not only relatively but absolutely) has the influx of fresh elements from the intelligentsia become. The Leipziger Volkszeitung (the German Social-Democratic newspaper) sought for a long time in vain, through newspaper advertisements, an editorial worker with a university training. Here a conclusion forces itself upon us, a conclusion completely contrary to Adler: the more

definitely socialism has revealed its content, the easier it has become for each and everyone to understand its mission in history, the more *decidedly have the intelligentsia recoiled from it. While this does not mean that they fear socialism itself, it is nevertheless plain that in the capitalist countries of Europe there must have occurred some deep-going social changes which have hindered fraternization between university people and the workers, at the same time as they have facilitated the coming of the workers to the socialist movement.*

What sort of changes have these been? The most intelligent individuals, groups and strata from the proletariat have joined and are joining *Social-Democracy. The growth and concentration of industry and transport is merely hastening this process. A completely different type of process is going on where the intelligentsia are concerned. The tremendous capitalist development of the last two decades has unquestionably skimmed off the cream of this class. The most talented intellectual forces, those with power of initiative and flight of thought, have been irrevocably absorbed by capitalist industry, by the trusts, railway companies and banks, which pay fantastic salaries for organizational work. Only second-raters remain for the service of the state, and government offices, no less than newspaper editors of all tendencies, complain about the shortage of 'people'. As regards the representatives of the ever-increasing semi-proletarian intelligentsia - unable to escape from their eternally dependent and materially insecure way of life - for them, carrying out as they do fragmentary, second-rate and not very attractive functions in the great mechanism of culture, the cultural interests to which Adler appeals cannot be strong enough independently to direct their political sympathies towards the socialist movement.*

Added to this is the circumstance that any European intellectual for whom going over to the camp of collectivism is not psychologically out of the question has practically no hope of winning a position of personal influence for himself in the ranks of the proletarian parties. And this question is of decisive importance. A worker comes to socialism as a part of a whole, along with his class, from which he has no prospect of escaping. He is even pleased with the feeling of his moral unity with the mass, which makes him more confident and stronger. The intellectual, however, comes to socialism, breaking his class umbilical cord, as an individual, as a personality, and inevitably seeks to exert influence as an individual. But just here he comes up against obstacles - and as time passes the bigger these obstacles become. At the beginning of the social-democratic movement, every intellectual who joined, even though not above the average, won for himself a place in the working-class movement. Today every newcomer finds, in the western European countries, the

colossal structure of working class democracy already existing. Thousands of labour leaders, who have automatically been promoted from their class, constitute a solid apparatus at the head of which stand honoured veterans, of recognized authority, figures that have already become historic. Only a man of exceptional talent would in these circumstances be able to hope to win a leading position for himself - but such a man, instead of leaping across the abyss into a camp alien to him, will naturally follow the line of least resistance into the realm of industry or state service. Thus there also stands between the intelligentsia and socialism, like a watershed, in addition to everything else, the organizational apparatus of Social Democracy. It arouses discontent among members of the intelligentsia with socialist sympathies, from whom it demands discipline and self-restraint - sometimes in respect of their 'opportunism' and sometimes, contrariwise, in respect of their excessive 'radicalism' - and dooms them to the role of querulous lookers-on who vacillate in their sympathies between anarchism and national-liberalism.....

In considering that it is impossible to win the intelligentsia to collectivism with a programme of immediate material gains Adler is absolutely right. But this still does not signify that it is possible to win the intelligentsia by any means at all, nor that immediate material interests and class ties do not affect the intelligentsia more cogently than all the cultural-historical prospects offered by socialism.

If we exclude that stratum of the intelligentsia which directly serves the working masses, as workers' doctors, lawyers and so on....., then we see that the most important and influential part of the intelligentsia owes its livelihood to payments out of industrial profit, rent from land or the state budget, and thus is directly or indirectly dependent on the capitalist classes or the capitalist state.

Abstractly considered, this material dependence puts out of the question only militant political activity in the anti-capitalist ranks, but not spiritual freedom in relation to the class which provides employment. In actual fact, however, this is not so. Precisely the 'spiritual' nature of the work that the intelligentsia do inevitably forms a spiritual tie between them and the possessing classes. Factory managers and engineers with administrative responsibilities necessarily find themselves in constant antagonism to the workers, against whom they are obliged to uphold the interests of capital. It is self-evident that the function they perform must, in the last analysis, adapt their ways of thinking and their opinions to itself. Doctors and lawyers, despite the more independent nature of their work, necessarily have to be in psychological contact with their clients. While an electrician can, day after day, install electric wiring in the offices of ministers, bankers

and their mistresses, and yet remain himself in spite of this, it is a different matter for a doctor, who is obliged to find music in his soul and in his voice which will accord with the feelings and habits of these persons. This sort of contact, moreover, inevitably takes place not only at the top end of bourgeois society. The suffragettes of London engage a pro-suffragette lawyer to defend them. A doctor who treats majors' wives in Berlin or the wives of 'Christian-Social' shopkeepers in Vienna, a lawyer who handles the affairs of their fathers, brothers and husbands, can hardly allow himself the luxury of enthusiasm for the cultural prospects of collectivism. All this applies likewise to writers, artists, sculptors, entertainers - not so directly and immediately, but no less inexorably. They offer the public their work or their personalities, they depend on its approval and its money, and so, whether in an open or a hidden way, they subordinate their creative achievement to that 'great monster' which they hold in such contempt: the bourgeois mob.....

Here is revealed once more the profound social difference between the conditions of brain work and manual work. Though it enslaves the muscles and exhausts the body, factory work is powerless to subject to itself the worker's mind. All the measures which have been attempted to get control of the latter, in Switzerland as in Russia, have proved uniformly fruitless. The brain worker is from the physical standpoint incomparably freer. The writer does not have to get up when the hooter sounds, behind the doctor's back stands no supervisor, the lawyer's pockets are not searched when he leaves the court. But in return, he is compelled to sell not his mere labour-power, not just the tension of his muscles, but his entire personality as a human being - and not through fear but through conscientiousness. As a result, these people don't want to see and cannot see that their professional frock-coat is nothing but a prisoner's uniform of better cut than ordinary.....

The university is the final stage of the state organized education of the sons of the possessing and ruling classes, just as the barracks is the final educational institution for the young generation of the workers and peasants. The barracks fosters the psychological habits of obedience and discipline appropriate to the subordinate social functions to be fulfilled subsequently. The university, in principle, trains for management, leadership, government.....

Among the workers the difference between 'fathers' and 'sons' is purely one of age. Among the intelligentsia it is not only a difference of age but also a social difference. The student, in contrast both to the young worker and to his own father, fulfils no social function, does not feel direct dependence on capital or the state, is not bound by any responsibilities, and - at least objectively, if not subjectively - is free

in his judgement of right and wrong. At this period everything within him is fermenting, his class prejudices are as formless as his ideological interests, questions of conscience matter very strongly to him, his mind is opening for the first time to great scientific generalizations.....

But here too we are obliged to pull up short before a bald fact. It is not only Europe's intelligentsia as a whole but its offspring too, the students, who decidedly don't show any attraction towards socialism. There is a wall between the workers' party and the mass of the students. To account for this fact merely by the inadequacy of agitational work, which has not been able to approach the intelligentsia from the correct angle, which is how Adler tries to account for it, means overlooking the whole history of the relations between the students and the 'people'; it means seeing in the students an intellectual and moral category rather than a product of social history. True, their material dependence on bourgeois society affects the students only obliquely, through their families, and is therefore weakened. But, as against this, the general social interests and needs of the classes from which the students are recruited are reflected in the feelings and opinions of the students with full force, as though in a resonator. Throughout their entire history - in its best, most heroic moments just as in periods of utter moral decay - the students of Europe have been merely the sensitive barometer of the bourgeois classes.....

Here we have militant idealismwhich is characteristic not of a class or of an idea but of an age-group; on the other hand, the political content of this idealism is entirely determined by the historical spirit of those classes from which the students come and to which they return.....

In the last analysis, all possessing classes send their sons to university, and if students were to be, while at the university, a tabula rasa on which socialism could write its message, what would then become of class heredity, and of poor old historical determinism?.....

The bridges between the classes are broken down, and to cross over, one would have to leap across an abyss which gets deeper with every passing day. Thus, parallel with conditions that objectively make it easier for the intelligentsia to grasp theoretically the essence of collectivism, the social obstacles are growing greater in the way of political adhesion by the intelligentsia to the socialist army. Joining the socialist movement in any advanced country, where social life exists, is not a speculative act, but a political one, and here social will completely prevails over theorizing reason. And this finally means that it is harder to win the intelligentsia today than it was yesterday, and that it will be harder tomorrow than it is today.

In this process, too, however, there is a break in 'gradualness'. The attitude of the intelligentsia to socialism, which we have described as

one of alienation which increases with the very growth of the socialist movement, can and must change decisively as a result of an objective political change which will shift the balance of social forces in radical fashion. Among Adler's assertions this much is true, that the intelligentsia is interested in the retention of capitalist exploitation not directly and not unconditionally, but only obliquely, through the bourgeois classes, in so far as the intelligentsia is materially dependent on these latter. The intelligentsia might go over to collectivism if it were given reason to see as probable the immediate victory of collectivism, if collectivism arose before it not as the ideal of a different, remote and alien class but as a near and tangible reality: finally, if - and this is not the least important condition - a political break with the bourgeoisie did not threaten each brain-worker taken separately with grave material and moral consequences. Such conditions can be established for the intelligentsia of Europe only by the political rule of a new social class; to some extent by a period of direct and immediate struggle for this rule. Whatever may have been the alienation of the European intelligentsia from the working masses.....nevertheless, in an epoch of great social reconstruction the intelligentsia - sooner, probably, than the other intermediate classes - will go over to the side of the defenders of the new society. A big role will be played in this connection by the intelligentsia's social qualities, which distinguish it from the commercial and industrial petty-bourgeoisie and peasantry: its occupational ties with the cultural branches of social labour, its capacity for theoretical generalization, the flexibility and mobility of its thinking: in short, its intellectuality. Confronted with the inescapable fact of the transfer of the entire apparatus of society into new hands, the intelligentsia of Europe will be able to convince itself that the conditions thus established not only will not cast them into the abyss but on the contrary, will open before them unlimited possibilities for the application of technical, organizational and scientific forces; and they will be able to bring forward these forces from their ranks, even in the first, most critical period, when the new regime will have to overcome enormous technical, social and political difficulties.

But if the actual conquest of the apparatus of society depended on the previous coming over of the intelligentsia to the party of the European proletariat, then the prospects of collectivism would be wretched indeed - because, as we have endeavoured to show above, the coming over of the intelligentsia to Social Democracy within the framework of the bourgeois regime is getting, contrary to Max Adler's expectations, less and less possible as time goes by." ”

The second viewpoint on intellectuals is comprised of selected extracts from the writings of Gramsci.

“ Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialised category of intellectuals. The problem is a complex one, because of the variety of forms assumed to date by the real historical process of formation of the different categories of intellectuals.

The most important of these forms are two:

1. Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc. It should be noted that the entrepreneur himself represents a higher level of social elaboration, already characterised by a certain directive and technical (i.e. intellectual) capacity: he must have a certain technical capacity, not only in the limited sphere of his activity and initiative but in other spheres as well, at least in those which are closest to economic production. He must be an organiser of masses of men; he must be an organiser of the 'confidence' of investors in his business, of the customers for his product, etc.

If not all entrepreneurs, at least an elite amongst them must have the capacity to be an organiser of society in general, including all its complex organism of services, right up to the state organism, because of the need to create the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class; or at least they must possess the capacity to choose the deputies (specialised employees) to whom to entrust this activity of organising the general system of relationships external to the business itself. It can be observed that the 'organic' intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part 'specialisations' of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence.....

2. However, every 'essential' social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of a development of this structure, has found.....categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms.

The most typical of these categories of intellectuals is that of the ecclesiastics, who for a long time (for a whole phase of history, which is partly characterised by this very monopoly) held a monopoly of a number of important services: religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with school, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc. The category of ecclesiastics can be considered the category of intellectuals organically bound to the landed aristocracy.....

Since these various categories of traditional intellectuals experience through an 'esprit de corps' their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. This self-assessment is not without consequences in the ideological and political field, consequences of wide-ranging import. The whole of idealist philosophy can easily be connected with this position assumed by the social complex of intellectuals and can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as 'independent,' autonomous, endowed with a special character of their own, etc.....

What are the 'maximum' limits of acceptance of the term 'intellectual'? Can one find a unitary criterion to characterise equally all the diverse and disparate activities of intellectuals and to distinguish these at the same time and in an essential way from the activities of other social groupings? The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations. Indeed the worker or proletarian, for example, is not specifically characterised by his manual or instrumental work, but by performing this work in specific conditions and in specific social relations.....And we have already observed that the entrepreneur, by virtue of his very function, must have to some degree a certain number of qualifications of an intellectual nature although his part in society is determined not by these, but by the general social relations which specifically characterise the position of the entrepreneur within industry.

All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.....

The problem of creating a new stratum on intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development.....

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor,

organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator (but superior at the same time to the abstract mathematical spirit); from technique as work on proceeds to technique as science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains 'specialised' and does not become 'directive'.

+ (editorial footnote: This extremely condensed and elliptical sentence contains a number of key Gramscian ideas: on the possibility of proletarian cultural hegemony through domination of the work process, on the distinction between organic intellectuals of the working class and traditional intellectuals from outside, on the unity of theory and practice.....).

Thus there are historically formed specialised categories for the exercise of the intellectual function. They are formed in connection with all social groups, but especially in connection with the more important, and they undergo more extensive and complex elaboration in connection with the dominant social group. One of the more important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals.....

The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in varying degrees, 'mediated' by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the 'functionaries. It should be possible both to measure the 'organic quality' of the various intellectual strata and their degree of connection with a fundamental social group, and to establish a gradation of their functions and of the superstructures from the bottom to the top (from the structural base upwards). What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private', and that of 'political society' or 'the State'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'juridical' government. The functions in question are precisely organisational and connective. The intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government.

These comprise:

1. The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige

(and consequent confidence, which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2. The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups which do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.....

The central point of the question remains the distinction between intellectuals as an organic category of every fundamental social group, and intellectuals as a traditional category. From this distinction there flow a whole series of problems and possible questions for historical research.

The most interesting problem is that which, when studied from this point of view, relates to the modern political party, its real origins, its developments and the forms which it takes. What is the character of the political party in relation to the problem of the intellectuals? Some distinctions must be made:

1. The political party for some social groups is nothing other than their specific way of elaborating their own category of organic intellectuals directly in the political and philosophical field and not just in the field of productive technique. These intellectuals are formed in this way and cannot indeed be formed in any other way, given the general character and the conditions of formation, life and development of the social group.

2. The political party, for all groups, is precisely the mechanism which carries out in civil society the same function as the State carries out, more synthetically and over a larger scale, in political society. In other words it is responsible for welding together the organic intellectuals of a given group - the dominant one - and the traditional intellectuals....”

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